



Natural Resources
Conservation Service
100 USDA, Suite 206
Stillwater, OK 74074
Voice: 405.742.1204
Web: www.ok.nrcs.usda.gov

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Robert Hathorne, Public Affairs Specialist
405-338-5207, robert.hathorne@ok.usda.gov

State Conservationist Urges Farm and Ranch Participation in Monarch Initiative
Signup deadline: July 20

STILLWATER, Okla., July 6, 2016—The window for participation in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) program to combat decline of the monarch butterfly by improving agricultural land has been extended through July 20. The [Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project](#) provides technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers to improve or create habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Prospective participants should contact their [local USDA service center](#) before the July 20 deadline to apply.

State Conservationist for Oklahoma, Gary O'Neill reminds Oklahomans, "the conservation practices that benefit monarch butterfly are the same practices that improve forage quality for livestock and build soil health."

The project will assist landowners with practices such as prescribed fire, brush and cedar management and prescribed grazing—these practices benefit livestock and monarchs alike. By integrating pollinator strips into cover crops, farmers can provide monarch habitat while also building soil health and providing some forage for cattle.

"Monarch populations have declined in part due to herbicide use that has negatively impacted fall nectaring plants—a key resource for the butterflies during their migration," said Dick Zetterberg, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs in Oklahoma. "This project gives landowners the opportunity to help an iconic species and protect our food supply."

Pollinators are required for 70 of the world's top 100 food crops.

Several informational workshops are planned to answer questions landowners may have and provide assistance with program participation. Workshop times and locations will be announced soon.

The Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project utilizes funds from NRCS's popular [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) to focus on core monarch migration routes through 10 states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas and Wisconsin. The [full list](#) of monarch conservation practices in Oklahoma includes financial assistance for 10 core practices and 11 supporting practices.

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